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Central Intelligence Agency



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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

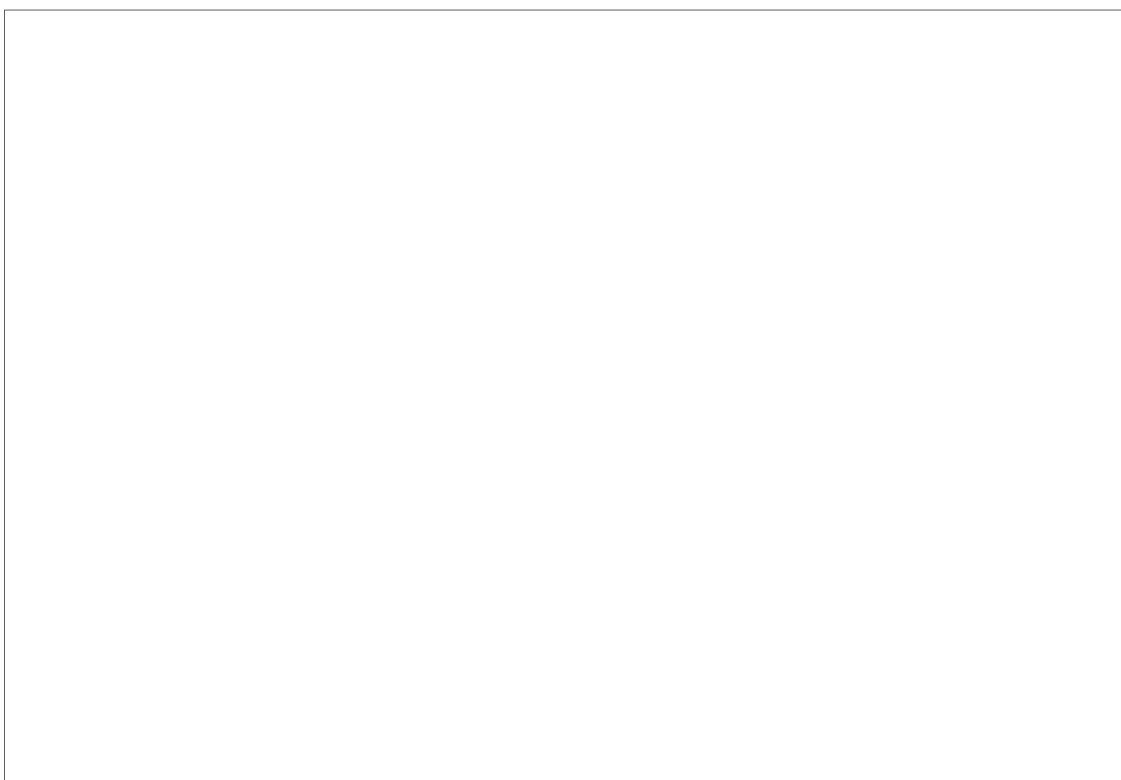
3 July 1985

Iran's Role in Closing Days of the Hostage Crisis



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Summary



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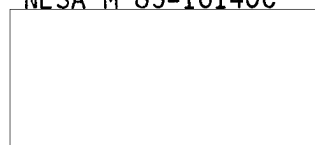
This paper was prepared by [redacted] of the Persian Gulf Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Persian Gulf Division, NESA, on [redacted]

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Effect on the Lebanese Imbroglio

The TWA hijacking probably will not significantly affect the relations between Hizballah and Tehran. We expect radical Lebanese Shia leaders will resent Iran's willingness to cooperate with Syria in putting pressure on Hizballah, but neither side will want to strain their relationship by making an issue of Tehran's role over this one incident. Most radical Shia leaders, in fact, probably are concerned that with the end of the hostage crisis and of Amal's offensive against the Palestinian camps, Amal may turn its attention to reining in Hizballah. Iranian assistance still will be considered important. [redacted]

We doubt the degree of Iranian guidance of Hizballah [redacted] [redacted] will persist. The radical Shias have their own agenda and capacity to act independently of Iran. Nevertheless, this incident indicates Tehran can exercise significant influence on at least some of the occasions it chooses to do so. [redacted]

Iran and Syria seem likely in the near term to continue to avoid letting their differences over Lebanon jeopardize bilateral relations. As long as their interests coincide, they will attempt to contend for influence in Lebanon primarily through political competition for support of Lebanese factions rather than through military confrontation between Amal and Hizballah. The rival Shia militias, however, are likely to engage in sporadic clashes, and each may attempt to assassinate the other's members. [redacted]

Iran's Public Reaction

Iranian media and official statements following the release of the hostages have been sparse and muted--the same approach taken throughout the

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incident. The statements have alluded to the continued "threatening" presence of US military forces in the region, but the remarks have not been particularly belligerent--certainly no more so than normal Iranian propaganda. There has been no concerted effort to stir up anti-US fervor. Tehran seems to want the crisis to slip quietly from official notice.

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We believe the Iranians saw no benefit to be derived from sullyng their current effort to project a more reasonable image by taking a belligerent stand on the hijacking. Rafsanjani's coincidental visits to Japan and China provided an added incentive to mute Iranian propaganda.

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Iran will continue to follow a two-track policy regarding Hizballah's role in the hijacking. For international consumption, Iran will play down its and Hizballah's role, in support of its image-building efforts in the West. Inside Lebanon, however, Tehran will try to inflate Hizballah's role as a counter to Barri.

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Impact on Iranian Politics

We do not believe the outcome of the hostage affair will become a major issue among Iranian factions, or significantly harm Rafsanjani's position. Most Iranian radicals probably preferred using the hostages to gain major concessions--such as a complete Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon and release of the Da'wa prisoners in Kuwait. Khomeini's apparent approval of Rafsanjani's agreement, however, ensures that any opposition will remain muted. Iran's reservations about hijackings also will undercut any attempt by the radicals to accuse Rafsanjani of a sellout.

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The radicals might attempt to use the issue to disparage Rafsanjani in behind-the-scenes maneuvering if the peaceful resolution of the crisis proves, over time, to be a turning point which allowed Barri to gain the upper hand over Hizballah for the support of Lebanese Shias. Khomeini's death while the issue is fresh would leave Rafsanjani even more exposed. At the most, however, Rafsanjani's role in the affair probably will be only one of many issues the radicals could use against him.

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For now, Iran's role in the crisis strengthens our assessment that foreign policy decisionmaking is dominated by pragmatists--Rafsanjani being the prime example--who determine policy largely on the basis of what will best serve Iranian national interests. They by no means eschew terrorism, but terrorism is only one of the instruments in Iran's arsenal, not necessarily its centerpiece.

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